Kay D. Weeks

Historic Preservation Treatment
Toward a Common Language

Standards *leaflet (see page 35 for ordering information).*

In "The Language of Preservation," the introductory chapter of William J. Murtagh's book, *Keeping Time* (1988), the author comments at length on the confusion of historic preservation terminology. He concludes, "Today, the typical interdisciplinary team of specialists working on preservation projects and programs is composed of people united by a common goal, but not necessarily a common language."

When Bill Murtagh's book was published in 1988, there seemed to be good reason to believe that considerable progress had been made in achieving "a common language," where, for example, Preservation and Restoration were broadly understood for their distinct differences and not used interchangeably in everyday speech or work proposals.

adaptive use
conservation
maintenance
preservation
protection
reconstitution

"We must strive for a language of preciseness, one that is universally understood and accepted."

—W. J. Murtagh

reconstruction
recycling
refurbishment
rehabilitation
remodeling
renovation
replication
restoration
stabilization

Optimism for the adoption of "a common language" in the late 1980s was based on the fact that the Department's first professional standards for work on historic resources, codified in 1978 as 36 CFR 68, had already been in use across the country for a decade! *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects* were, without a doubt, linguistic and philosophical ground-breakers in the United States.[1] Their publication in 1978 represented a pioneering effort in the development of principles (together with accompanying Guidelines) that would successfully link historic preservation theory to practice.

The first Standards held up remarkably well in spite of the fact that the "common language" problems seemed to persist. The Standards were cited as the requirement for all grant-in-aid projects assisted through the National Historic Preservation Fund for 14 years. But, with over a decade of debate in the field, coupled with an expanding "register" of places and burgeoning technologies, the first Standards were bound to need updating. Revision, viewed by Murtagh, is more than merely inevitable. "It seems clear that the vocabulary of preservation will continue to evolve so long as the activity it describes remains a vital one."

Within that positive framework of change, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* were codified as 36 CFR 68 in the July 12, 1995 Federal Register (Vol. 60, No. 133). The revised 1995 Standards replace both the 1978 and 1983 versions.[2]

Revised Secretary's Standards (1995) for Four Treatments
Preservation
Rehabilitation
Restoration
Reconstruction

Differences Between the 1978 and 1995 Standards (36 CFR 68)

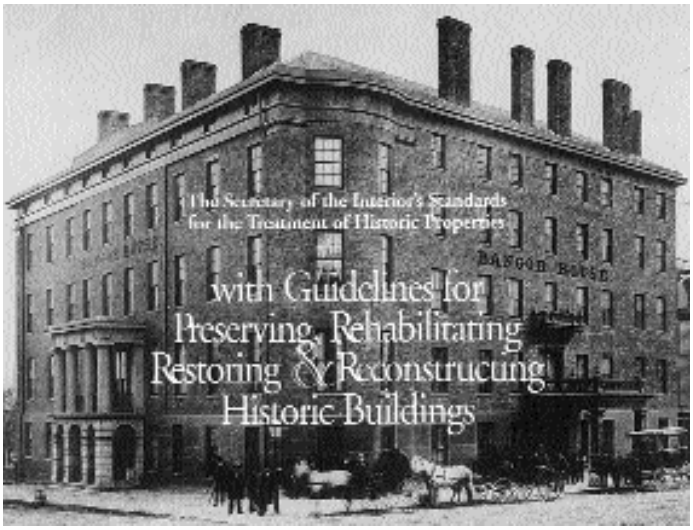
Revisions to the 1978 *Standards for Historic Preservation Projects* began in 1990 in conjunction with the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers and meetings with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and a number of other outside organizations. Goals included broadening the Standards to encompass *all* National Register property types; sharpening the language; reducing the document in length; and making clearer distinctions between treatment approaches. The results follow.

First, the 1995 Standards may now be applied to all historic resource types listed in the National Register of Historic Places, including buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts.

Second, the revised Standards eliminate the general and specific standards format. In the 1978 system, general Standards applied to every project, even though the philosophical goals of work might differ dramatically. Specific Standards to be used in conjunction with general Standards acknowledged the differences in work approaches, but resulted in a total of 77 Standards—in combination—as opposed to a total of 34 in the revision. Further, the Standard for Acquisition was deleted; and Protection and Stabilization were consolidated under a single Preservation treatment. As a result, the total number of treatments was reduced from seven to four—Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction.

Most important, however, the distinctions between the four treatments are now underscored within an established hierarchical framework. Thus, the first treatment, *Preservation,* places a high premium on the retention of *all* historic fabric through conservation, maintenance, and repair. *Rehabilitation,* the second treatment, emphasizes the retention and repair of historic materials, but more latitude is provided for replacement because it is assumed the property is more deteriorated prior to work. (Both Preservation and Rehabilitation standards focus attention on the preservation of those materials, features, finishes, spaces, and spatial relationships that, together, give a property its historic character.) *Restoration,* the third treatment, focuses on the retention of materials from the most significant time in a property's history, while permitting the removal of materials from other periods. *Reconstruction,* the fourth treatment, establishes limited opportunities to re-create a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object in all new materials.

In summary, the simplification and sharpened focus of these revised sets of treatment Standards is intended to assist users in making sound historic preservation decisions—and promote the use of "a common language" in the planning stages of work.



The following central ideas in the 1995 Standards (36 CFR 68) are shown in juxtaposition, to emphasize the relationship and differences among the four philosophical constructs:

Standards for Preservation

Use the property as it was used historically or find a new use that maximizes retention of distinctive features.

Preserve the historic character (continuum of property's history).

Stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials.

Replace minimum amount of fabric necessary and in kind (match materials).

Standards for Rehabilitation

Use the property as it was used historically or find a new use that requires minimal change to distinctive features.

Preserve the historic character (continuum of property's history).

Do not make changes that falsify the historical development.

Repair deteriorated features. Replace a severely deteriorated feature with a matching feature (substitute materials may be used).

New additions and alterations should not destroy historic materials or character. New work should be differentiated from the old, yet compatible with it.

Standards for Restoration

Use the property as it was historically or find a new use that reflects the property's restoration period.

Remove features from other periods, but document them first.

Stabilize, consolidate, and conserve features from the restoration period.

Replace a severely deteriorated feature from the restoration period with a matching feature (substitute materials may be used).

Replace missing features from the restoration period based on documentation and physical evidence. Do not make changes that mix periods and falsify history.

Do not execute a design that was never built.

Standards for Reconstruction

Do not reconstruct vanished portions of a property unless the reconstruction is essential to the public understanding.

Reconstruct based on documentary and physical evidence.

Precede reconstruction with thorough archeological investigation.

Preserve any remaining historic features.

Re-create the appearance of the property (substitute materials may be used).

Identify the reconstructed property as a contemporary re-creation.

Do not execute a design that was never built.

A Common Language...and More

Certainly, as the field of historic preservation continues to grow and change, the Standards will be revised again. No philosophical system is ever permanent. But this announcement is, in part, to underscore the notion that achieving a common language for historic preservation treatment is at least in an active state of evolution. And the concern, as Murtagh also consistently argued in *Keeping Time*, is far more than a matter of language.

Treating historic properties has the capability of changing their physical history, and, as a result, the way they will be remembered, studied, and interpreted by future generations. If historians, architects, administrators, and practitioners agree on treatment philosophy and methodology prior to work, the long-term consequences of treatment can be better predicted and managed.

When historians make errors in fact or interpretation, the record of ideas may be corrected at a later time. Historic preservation—history manifested in tangible materials—does not permit that luxury. Knowing what the consequences of work will be in the planning phase provides the basis for more informed judgments about the irreplaceable material record. What we choose to repair, replace, or demolish ultimately determines how the property is understood by today's and tomorrow's viewers. Signs fall down and interpreters aren't always there. So essentially, the work itself is the explanation.

Educational Spin-Offs for the 21st Century

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (1995) is now in print. A 188-page book with numerous illustrations, the Guidelines for treating historic buildings are envisioned as a philosophical model for the development of "spin-off" Guidelines for every other historic property type listed in the National Register of Historic Places—sites, structures, objects, and districts. Beyond the historic property types, specific resources, such as barns, aircraft, habitation sites, bridges, sculpture and monuments, and central business districts are also prime candidates for helpful Guidelines using the umbrella Standards.

In this regard, Heritage Preservation Services' companion Standards and Guidelines for treating historic landscapes is slated for publication in 1996, following a period of careful coordination between NPS and the professional landscape community.

Finally, the Program is releasing a video, *Working on the Past with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, in early 1996. It addresses the four treatments, their differences, and the consequences of applying each one to a property using case studies and site interviews to make important points about the work. In this age of mixed media, an interactive computer program would seem to be the next, inevitable educational product to assist the public in choosing the most appropriate treatment for a historic property and providing in depth guidance on individual work approaches.

References

1 It is noted that a slightly modified version of the Standards for Rehabilitation was codified in 36 CFR 67, and focuses on "certified historic structures" as defined by the IRS Code of 1986. These regulations continue to be used in the Preservation Tax Incentives Program for property owners seeking certification for federal tax benefits. Illustrated Guidelines for the single treatment, Rehabilitation, continue to be available as a separate book in support of the Tax Incentives Program.

2 W. Brown Morton III and Gary L. Hume, co-authors

Kay D. Weeks serves as technical writer and editor for Heritage Preservation Services Program. She is co-author and principal architect of the 1990 Guidelines for Rehabilitation which continue in print; and co-author, with Anne E. Grimmer, of the newly published book, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, & Reconstructing Historic Buildings.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (1995) is available as a leaflet free of charge upon request from the Heritage Preservation Services Program.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, & Reconstructing Historic Buildings (illustrated book) is sold by the Government Printing Office for $12.00. Stock Number 024-005-01157-9. Send check or money order payable to Sup. Docs. Mail to Sup. Docs. P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954. MasterCard and VISA accepted. Phone orders to 202-512-1800; Fax orders to 202-512-2250.

Barbara J. Little

Public Benefits of Archeology

The Public Benefits of Archaeology conference was held in Santa Fe, New Mexico from November 5 to 8, 1995. The exchange of good ideas among over 150 participants contributed to the success of the meeting. Much of what was discussed about public benefits is applicable to cultural resources in a broader sense.

What did we learn? Just like politics, all archeology is local.

In spite of archeologists' frequent emphasis on global developments and culture change over long periods of time, it became apparent that what many people value about archeology is a sense of connection with time and place. Archeology can and does provide "common ground" among the many elements of diverse communities. Educators reinforced the value of archeology in teaching respect for other people and other times. Preparing both children and adults with an appreciation for a diverse world is an important contribution that archeological knowledge can make. We need to remember that as we go about our mundane tasks of Section 106 compliance and report review.

Many more valuable insights emerged as both speakers and audience members discussed various audiences for archeology, including visitors to sites and museums, teachers and students, Native Americans and other local communities, tourists, planners, avocational archeologists, scholars, and politicians. The conference ended with a discussion of how best to get the word out and a listing of "action items."

Katerine Slick, a Trustee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, admonished archeologists to "get on the tourism train." Tourism will soon replace manufacturing as the number one industry in the United States. Archeologists are able to contribute to Heritage Tourism, which relies on authenticity and quality. Highlighting authenticity as the appeal of museums, David Hurst Thomas spoke eloquently about the importance of archeology in presenting and preserving the "real things" that visitors find compelling.

The conference was sponsored by the National Park Service (National Register of Historic Places, Archeology and Ethnography Division, Southwest System Support Office, and Pecos National Historical Park); the Society for American Archaeology, the Society for Historical Archaeology; the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office, the National Association of State Archeologists, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

There will be a follow-up publication. If you are interested in being on the mailing list, please send your address to Barbara Little, National Register of Historic Places, P.O. Box 37127, Suite 250, Washington, DC 20013-7127.